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Ames Research Center
Moffett Field, California 94035-1000



Michael Mewhinney
NASA Ames Research Center, Moffett Field, Calif.
Phone: 650-604-3937/9000
E-mail: mmewhinney@mail.arc.nasa.gov

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Linda Strine
AirLaunch LLC, Kirkland, Wash.
Phone: 303-726-8416

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NASA TO PARTNER WITH AIRLAUNCH LLC ON SMALL SATELLITE DEVELOPMENT

NASA announced today that it has signed a memorandum of understanding with AirLaunch LLC, Kirkland, Wash., to explore collaborations in space launch systems and payloads launched from aircraft.

NASA Ames Research Center, Moffett Field, Calif., is seeking partnerships to promote the development of a robust commercial space industry to benefit and support NASA's exploration, science and aeronautics mission goals. Development of small spacecraft is a primary focus of NASA Ames and it is developing a 'skunk works' to build small satellites that cost less than \$250 million.

"NASA Ames will become a West Coast 'space portal' for affordable small satellites and other scientific and commercial payloads," said S. Pete Worden, director of NASA Ames. "A small commercial launch vehicle may be a very attractive approach for providing affordable, responsive launch capabilities for bio-tech, lunar and other small spacecraft payloads of interest to NASA and commercial users."

Under terms of the agreement, NASA Ames and AirLaunch LLC will explore areas of collaboration to include mission, vehicle, and payload concept analyses; systems engineering; and payload integration, as well as use of NASA Ames' facilities, such as its wind tunnels, arc-jet facility, flight simulators, hangars and runways.

"We're excited to partner with NASA Ames and leverage its long history of working with innovative companies and technologies to develop a robust commercial small payload market," said Debra Facktor Lepore, president of AirLaunch LLC. "Within a few years, government and commercial customers will be able to approach NASA Ames and AirLaunch to develop and launch small payloads using the latest technologies and facilities available at NASA Ames."

AirLaunch LLC is developing the QuickReach Small Launch Vehicle (SLV) concept under a contract with the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency/U.S. Air Force Falcon SLV program that also includes NASA participation. QuickReach is designed to meet the goals of affordable and responsive space lift, with the ability to deliver 1,000 pounds to low-Earth orbit for less than \$5 million per flight and launch within 24 hours notice. AirLaunch's rocket achieves responsiveness by launching from an unmodified C-17A or other large cargo aircraft.

AirLaunch LLC is a small business headquartered in Kirkland, Wash.

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